

Pandemic Flu Town Meeting
Tuesday, April 18, 2006 ♦ 7 p.m.
Fairfax County Government Center, Board Auditorium

Welcome

Good evening, it is my pleasure on behalf of the board to welcome those in attendance as well as our Channel 16 viewing audience to our Pandemic Flu Town Meeting this evening.

Before our community can respond to a pandemic, we need to understand what it is.

A pandemic flu is a global disease outbreak. It occurs when a new Influenza-A virus develops and humans become infected. Because it is new, no one is immune. Its spread is rapid and fierce.

In 1918, 40 million lives were lost. In 1957, 2 million and in 1968, 700,000. It is predicted that if such a catastrophic virus were to develop today, 35% of the population would be affected. Translated into Fairfax County this equates to 364,420 individuals.

A pandemic flu occurs in waves—typically two or three outbreaks over a twelve to eighteen month period. It takes at least six months to develop a vaccine. Even then there is never enough to go around.

Hospitals become so overcrowded that difficult decisions have to be made about who receives treatment. The current mortality rate with avian flu is 50%. That translates to perhaps several hundred thousand lost in Fairfax County if no vaccine is developed, overwhelming our hospital and medical services.

Travel becomes restricted; schools and businesses close and large public gatherings are prohibited.

Worst of all there is no way to predict an outbreak. For this reason advance planning is critical. We must collaborate as a community to explore and recognize how a pandemic would affect us specifically and what we will do should it happen. We must be leaders.

I am so proud that we have the opportunity to present what I like to call a “Pandemic Flu 101” seminar.

Not only is this an opportunity to learn the latest about pandemic flu, but it is your chance to ask questions that you haven’t been able to. Following the presentations, we will have staff throughout the auditorium with pads for you to write down your questions for the presenters, as well as two of the county’s deputy county executives who are leading the county’s pandemic flu planning process.

This is the first public gathering the county has held to discuss pandemic flu, but not the last. Next month, on Friday, May 26, Fairfax County business leaders and owners will attend a business summit on pandemic flu.

Many Homeowners Associations, civic clubs, nonprofit groups and religious organizations will want to discuss and become prepared for pandemic flu, so I encourage any of you that are leaders of your local groups to contact county staff who will be glad to attend and bring informational updates.

Planning Efforts

The county’s Pandemic Flu effort began in fall 2005, and involves representatives from approximately 30 county agencies, as well as the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church, the towns of Herndon and Vienna, private sector groups and partner organizations.

County planning initiatives are being undertaken in accordance with the emergency plans of the Virginia Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization. In addition, county officials are involved with National Capital region efforts being led by the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments.

Coordinating Committees have been formed to oversee the two broad functional areas of the planning efforts – Public Health, and Critical Infrastructure and Resource Management. These committees are responsible for all planning, response and

recovery components for their respective functional areas and ensuring these components are comprehensive and coordinated.

As you can see, pandemic flu planning is a high priority for the county and I would like to commend you for being serious about planning for a pandemic flu by attending this evening's town meeting. Preparing now will help protect you and your family later.

Conclusion

Again, I want to thank you for being with us this evening, whether in person or watching on Channel 16. You have taken that first step toward preparing you and your family for the possibilities of a pandemic flu. On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, I say thank you for attending and welcome to this evening's town meeting.